

# BRIDGES



March 31, 2023

## ***PROTECTING CHILDREN / ENDING PRACTICE OF RESTAVIKS***

Sr. Laura Dulude, all of you reading this, and our sisters who have gone on before us, who were moved by the plight of Haitian children in domestic service/slavery (Restaviks), were here in spirit Sunday, March 26.

More than 600 participants took part in this Open Space activity after eight weeks of dialogue groups about how to protect children. Each of the thirty groups (with 12 to 19 participants) used illustrated books with real stories of the plight of children in restavek situations. People shared strategies about raising their own children and the children of deceased relatives living with them.

Sunday all the participants had a chance to form different sharing groups among themselves so that they could develop a 4-neighborhood plan for ending violence against children and women and girls. As I was leaving, one lovely young woman asked, "Do we really have to stop after six months, this is so good of us!"



The Child Protection Program is funded by a grant from the Conrad H. Hilton Foundation to the Catholic Sisters Haiti Collaborative. The School Sisters of Notre Dame and their partner, Mercy Beyond Borders, are extending their program to four Gros Morne neighborhoods where leaders shared with the Religious of Jesus and Mary their interest in this program to change community attitudes.

- Sr. Pat Dillon

Bottom photo by Innocent Deryess,  
Program Coordinator for Gros Morne

## ***JPIC Committee Anti-Racism Project***



***We, as a province... commit to efforts at eradicating the evil of RACISM....***  
-Statement of Commitment, 2020 Province Assembly

Nora Pfeiffer, Director of the Franciscan Justice Circles invites us to listen to the story of Joan Trumpauer Mulholland who came to understand the harm caused by racism at a young age and responded with her heart.



Check out the 4-minute video : **“Responding to racism from the heart”** on the Franciscan Action Network’s website: <https://franciscanaction.org/seeing-anew-with-the-eyes-of-the-heart/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eid=f6d2fd3d-d907-4f2a-8a58-90f6973802ea>



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## **WORKING WITH NIÑOS IN SPAIN**

From February 19th until March 23rd I had the privilege of having the apostolic experience of the novitiate in Piños Puente, a small town outside of Granada in southern Spain. For 50 years, the sisters have run an escuela infantil (which is for infants through kindergarten) serving just over 100 pupils. I spent my days from 9:30 in the morning until 4:30 in the afternoon helping out in various classrooms, including trying my hand at teaching numbers, colors, and body parts in English. I'm not sure how much they learned but we had fun dancing, singing, and jumping all around. And of course they were all fascinated by the new person with the strange accent.



What is unique about this population, and why the bishop 50 years ago requested the sisters start a school, is that the population mostly consists of persons with gypsy ethnicity. The population is poor in many ways including a significant number who are illiterate. When the community first established themselves on the hillside above the town their homes were initially dug out as caves into the hillside. Now all the homes have grown into more "house" structures including having electricity and indoor plumbing (even though the majority tap into the electrical and plumbing lines illegally so they do not have to pay). Some of the homes even have in-ground pools and glass porches. Over time the community has transitioned from mostly subsisting on robbing transportation trucks to now many of them making their living through production and distribution of marijuana (which remains illegal here and why so many tap into the electrical and water systems as it takes a lot of energy and water to grow the marijuana) and arms trafficking. This has significantly increased the income for some of the population and many children in the neighborhood have iPhones and electric scooters. Yet, there remains a lack of prioritizing education and home environments remain unstable creating environments where the children after leaving our school do not thrive in the public school system. Therefore there remains a high illiteracy rate in the area and a vicious cycle of poverty.

The sisters for decades have wanted to extend the school into a primary school, but given that the school in the town isn't full (mostly due to poor education in the public school that those with means send their children to other schools) the government will not give approval and economic support to expand our little school on the hill.

Despite the challenges of educating in a more violent neighborhood, the sisters, who live in a home attached to the school, and the entire extraordinary staff team are a shining example for the students and families at the school, with their energy and love for the children and excitement to see the children learn and grow. The experience was a month full of life, love, learning, and many, many hugs from the little ones. Attached are pictures from our visit to the Alhambra palace and gardens with the 4 and 5 year olds.



- Brittany Galvin, NJM

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# RJM JUBILARIANS FOR 2023

Eastern Celebration will be:

**Saturday, May 20th**  
**at the Marillac Residence,**  
**Wellesley Hills, MA**



Sr. Doris Bissonnette, RJM



Sr. Mary Sanchez, RJM



Sr. Gertrude Lavoie, RJM



Sr. Alice Ouimette, RJM



Sr. Jacqueline Jacques, RJM



Sr. Bernadette Berard, RJM



Sr. Mary Bourdon, RJM



Sr. Pauline Ayotte, RJM



Sr. Vivian Patenaude, RJM



Sr. Janet Stolba, RJM



Sr. Michelle Authier, RJM



Sr. Alice Cote, RJM



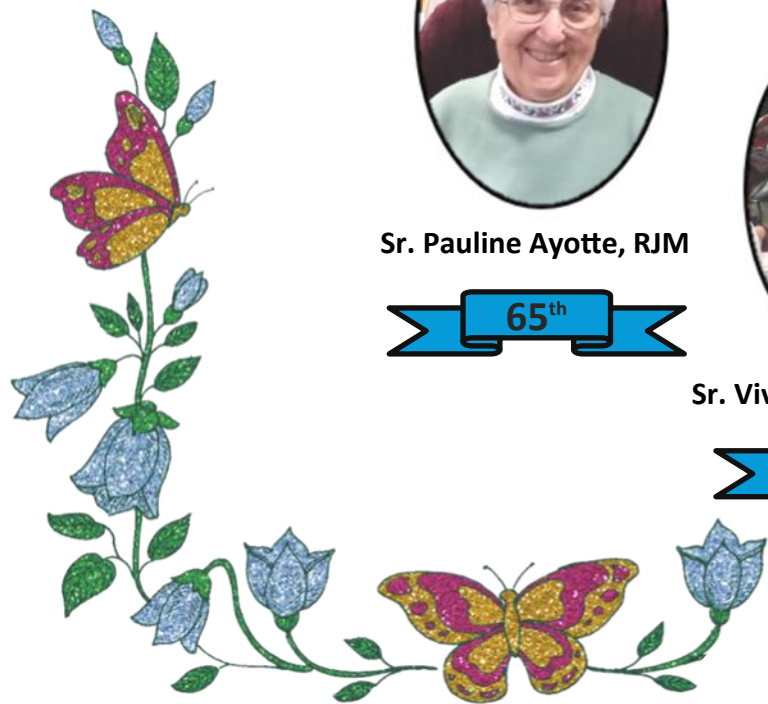
Sr. Claudette Lapointe, RJM



Sr. Teresita Morse, RJM



**895**  
Total number of years  
of love & service





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## ***NEW PARTNER IN MISSION: Director of Mission Advancement***

Mr. Tobias (Toby) Harkleroad has accepted an offer to assume the position of Director of Mission Advancement for the USA/Haiti Province. He is scheduled to begin on April 3<sup>rd</sup>.



Toby's appointment concludes a process that began in the Province Assembly's *Statement of Commitment*, in which members pledged to "strengthen our volunteer program," and "direct more financial resources to mission." When the present Leadership Team took office, work was already well underway with consultants to formulate a development plan and a job description for a director. As this continued, it became clear that the two roles of Director of Development and Director of Companions in Mission might well be combined into this new role of Mission Advancement. The DC Leadership Team found in Toby the combination of passion for mission, experience and competence that made him the ideal choice.

Our new director's background includes time as the Director of Campaigns for the Franciscan Action Network and eleven years as the Founding Principal of St. Francis International School in Silver Spring, MD. He has received awards for his work including one for *Leadership in Promoting Diversity in Catholic Education*. Among his presentations is a lecture given as part of a "Laudato Si Revolution Course" sponsored by the Order of Friars Minor: *A Path Towards a Comprehensive Ecological Education and Spirituality for Social Transformation*. Toby is currently pursuing a doctorate in ministry development at the Virginia Theological Seminary.

***We warmly welcome our new companion in mission!***

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## ***NEW SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS IN NEW YORK***

Sister Mary Grace Walsh, ASCJ, Ph.D., has accepted an invitation to serve as the next Superintendent of Schools for the Archdiocese of New York. She will succeed Mr. Michael Deegan. A member of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a religious congregation of women with a particular devotion to education, she has served in the archdiocese as both a teacher and principal in NY Catholic schools, as well as receiving a Ph.D. in Educational Administration/Church Leadership from Fordham University.

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## ***ELECTRONIC DIRECTORY and REMEMBRANCE BOOK***

The new Community and Ministry Directory and the new Remembrance Book were recently mailed out. Electronic copies will be available Monday. If you would like an electronic copy of either, please email your request to Molly at [mshakeri@rjmusa.org](mailto:mshakeri@rjmusa.org).

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## **ST. FRANCES STUDENTS "DRESS FOR A CAUSE"**

Sr. Patricia Brito, Principal of St. Frances de Chantal School, recently sent a check for \$1,300 to be given to our sisters in Syria for their work with victims of the recent earthquake. The money was raised from *Dress for a Cause Day*.

Thank you, Pat, for initiating this!

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## **VIRTUAL WAY OF THE CROSS**

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns invites you to join them:

**Good Friday, April 7 at 12pm**

**Virtual Way of the Cross for Economic & Ecological Justice**



The observance of Christ' passion is an opportunity to reflect on the ways we have broken our covenant with God at the expense of other persons and creation. At each station, we will focus on a different economic or ecological challenge or sign of hope for our times.

[Click here](#) to register via Zoom. You will also be able to watch the presentation live on [YouTube](#). The script is attached to the Bridges email for your own use, to use with your community, or to follow along on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

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## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THOSE WITH APRIL BIRTHDAYS**



April 16 Bernadette Berard, RJM

April 16 Eileen Reid, RJM

April 19 Rita Ricker, RJM

April 21 Patricia Ryerse, RJM

April 25 Mary Sanchez, RJM

April 27 Rosemary Mangan, RJM

## **HAPPY BIRTHDAY SR. MARY BERCHMANS!**

Sr. Mary Berchman Lowenberg celebrated her birthday on Wednesday in Rome.

She received an electronic card saying: *"with loving birthday wishes from all of us in the USA-Haiti Province - rejoicing in God's gift of life to you!"*



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## PROVINCE OFFICE

You'll note the Bridges schedule is different this month due to Easter and team meetings.

April 7 Office closed for Good Friday

April 13-15 Meeting of full team in Highland Mills, NY

April 21 Next Bridges published (articles due by Wednesday 4/19 at noon)

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## MOURNING TWO FRIENDS AND COMPANIONS IN MISSION

**Mr. Jose Alonzo**, friend of the community and longtime member of the New York Family of Jesus and Mary, died on March 25<sup>th</sup>. Together with his wife, Kathleen, Jose attended the Rome Associates meeting some years ago, and they have been generous contributors to the Haiti Mission Fund.

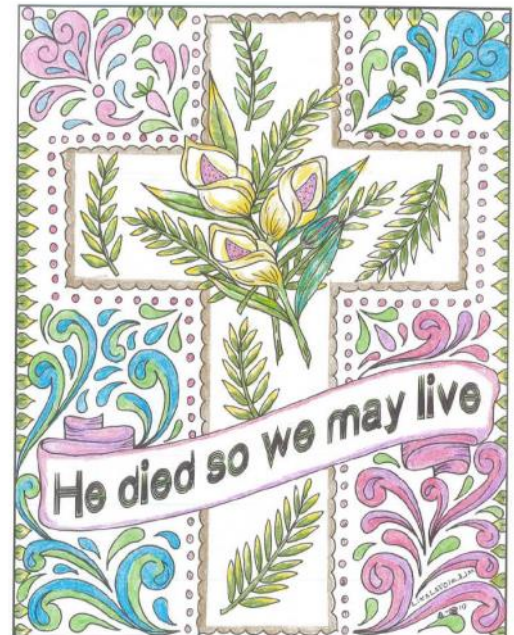


The RJMs and Jesus-Mary Parish School in Fon Ibo offer condolences to the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas on the death of **Sr. Mary Sullivan, RSM**. Sr. Mary, who was 95 when she died last week, was a founding member of Mercy Focus on Haiti and a dedicated friend of J-M School. In this 2015 photo, Sr. Mary is gathering information from school director, Leny Laguerre, about the needs of the school lunch program. (photo by Andi Healy)

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## PRAYERS ARE REQUESTED FOR...

- Continuing Prayers: Bob Patenaude; Ed Crepeau; Fr. Thomas Stegman; Sr. Natalia Mejia; the safety and security of the people of Haiti, and for God's blessings on all the efforts being made to bring peace and justice to this island nation; the people in Turkey and Syria as they recover from the earthquake;
- The repose of the soul of Jose Alonzo, and for the comfort of his loved ones;
- The repose of the soul of Mary Sullivan, RSM, and for the comfort of her loved ones;
- Comunidad-Caridad del Cobre (Noviciado de España) community (Brittany Galvin [novice], Arantxa Gavilán Álvarez, RJM, Carmen Sanz Marín, RJM, Christina Torrent, RJM, M<sup>a</sup> Jesús Olmos Rodríguez, RJM) as this week's community for special prayer.



**WE ALSO PRAY FOR ALL THE NEEDS  
OF OUR RJM SISTERS, FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

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**Praised Forever Be Jesus and Mary**